

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 089731
ORIGIN AF-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 089731

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AO, IR

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF UNITA CAPABILITIES

REF: TEHRAN 3200

1. YOU CAN INFORM ZELLI THAT THE LACK OF US
REPRESENTATION IN LUANDA SEVERELY RESTRICTS OUR ACCESS TO
RELIABLE FIRST-HAND INFORMATION ON SITUATION IN ANGOLA, BUT
THAT WE WOULD BE GLAD TO SHARE WITH HIM OUR IMPRESSIONS
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OF UNITA'S CAPABILITIES AND POTENTIALS.

2. UNITA APPEARS TO HAVE ABILITY TO DENY TO NETO
GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF LARGE RURAL AREAS OF SOUTHERN
ANGOLA. IN ADDITION,UNITA CLAIMS TO CONTROL TWO OR THREE
OF THE LARGER TOWNS IN THE AREA. MUCH OF THE TERRITORY
IN THIS ZONE SEEMS TO BE CONTESTED WITH NEITHER SIDE

ABLE TO CLAIM PERMANENT CONTROL. THE AREA WHERE UNITA IS VERY ACTIVE HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE BREAD-BASKET OF ANGOLA AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT IN AREAS UNDER CONTROL OF THE LUANDA GOVERNMENT BASIC FOOD ITEMS HAVE HAD TO BE IMPORTED CAUSING A DRAIN ON THE COUNTRY'S ALREADY LIMITED FOREIGN EXCHANGE. FURTHER, IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE MOST RECENT FAPLA/CUBAN OFFENSIVE IN THAT AREA HAS STALLED. UNITA'S ABILITY TO INFLICT LOSSES ON THE GOVERNMENT SIDE AND TO DENY ENDURING CONTROL OF

VAST AREAS (PERHAPS UP TO HALF OF ANGOLA) TO THE NETO GOVERNMENT LEAVES LITTLE DOUBT THAT IT HAS A SUBSTANTIAL BASE OF POPULAR SUPPORT. UNITA'S GUERRILLA CAPACITY TO CHALLENGE AND DAMAGE MPLA/CUBAN FORCES APPEARS TO HAVE GROWN IN RECENT MONTHS BUT, GIVEN LOGISTIC, TRIBAL AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS, IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT NEITHER SIDE WILL BE ABLE TO ASSUME FULL CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

3. FYI: WE REALIZE THAT THE FOREGOING IS SKIMPY BUT MOST OF OUR INFORMATION IS DERIVED FROM SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES WHICH IN TURN LIMITS WHAT WE CAN SHARE WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS. END FYI. VANCE

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